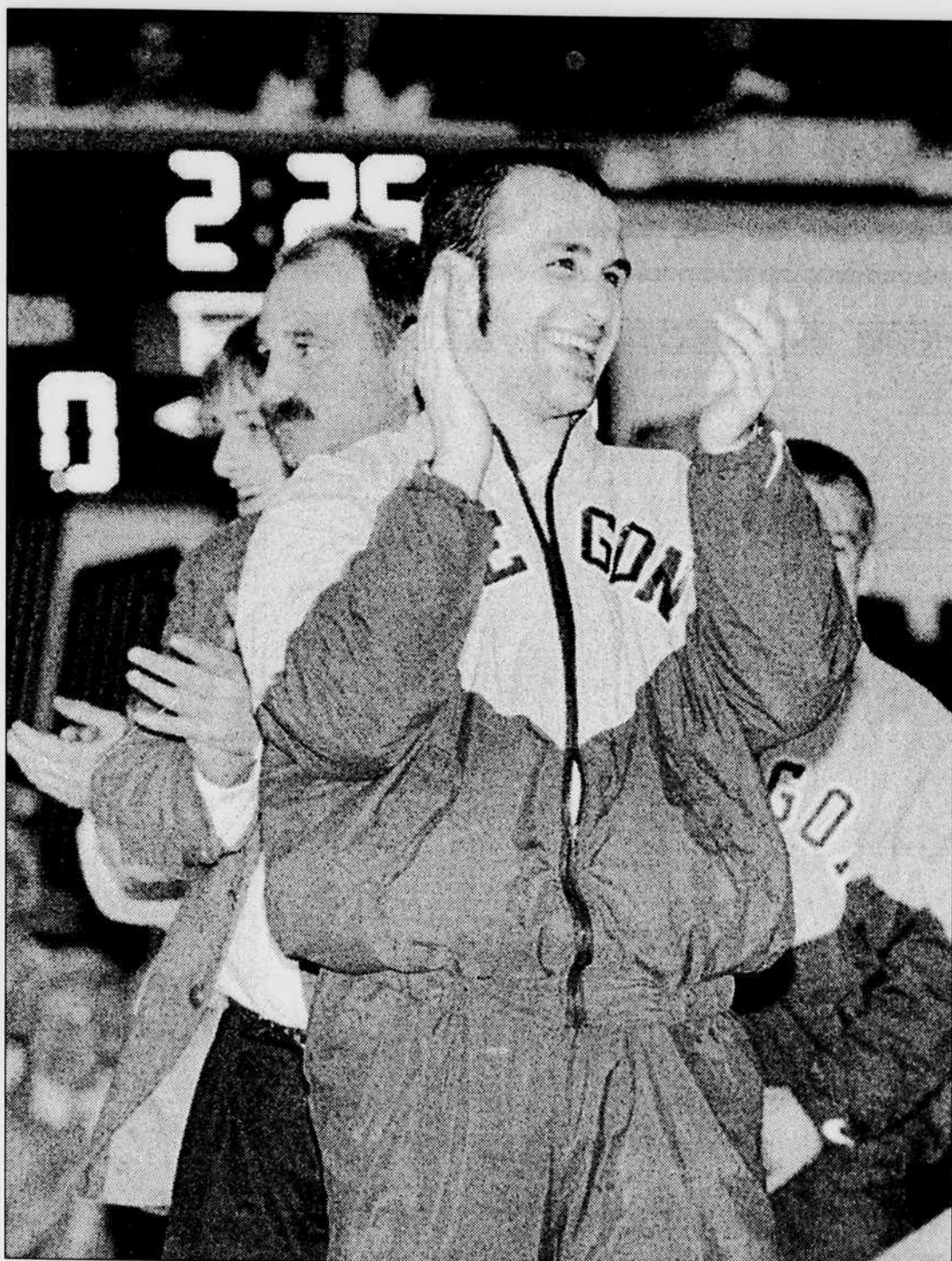




Sean Morgan, who has a perfect dual-meet record this season, is best known for his ability to fire up his teammates on and off the mat.

Morgan

Continued from Page 7A

As if that were not bad enough, Morgan blew out his right knee when he aggravated a high school injury about 18 matches into the season. He also sustained a neck injury.

Morgan says his injuries occurred in the early going because he was not ready for the vigorous season of college-level wrestling.

"I kind of fell apart my freshman year," Morgan says. "The college season is longer, so my body had to endure the extra three months."

Disappointment continued to plague Morgan into his sophomore year, when returning starter Scott Norton came into the season eight pounds too heavy, putting him in the 158-pound weight class, Morgan's intended weight.

But Morgan has always looked to the bright side of situations. Instead of looking at that dilemma as a bad thing, Morgan used it as a vehicle to fire himself up for the time when he would wrestle again.

"It got me eager to wrestle," he says. "I was weighing in at every competition just in case the coach decided to move guys. I knew I was moving down as soon as I got the chance, and I didn't want to blow it. I just wanted to wrestle."

His chance came almost halfway through the season. Norton moved down to 150 pounds, and an excited Morgan began wrestling immediately.

A road trip to California in January 1996 would be the first test of Morgan's comeback. He went

3-1 on the trip, solidifying his spot in the starting line up. In tournament play, he placed third at the Oregon Classic and seventh at the Mat Town Invitational.

"I started getting confidence," Morgan says. "I was beating guys and winning my matches."

Morgan's victories on the mat led him to his first Oregon post-season matches. At the Pacific-10 Conference Championship meet, Morgan placed second, losing a climactic 3-2 match to Matt Suter of Arizona State. Morgan's performance was good enough to advance him to the NCAA Championships, where he won two matches, but did not place.

Continuing the success from the previous season, Morgan took his junior year by storm, finishing as one of four wrestlers on the Ducks to collect 30 or more wins. He swept through the season and into the postseason, becoming the Pac-10 Champion and again reaching the National Championship, where he went 1-2.

Sonnen says it was during that year when Morgan became the team's leader.

"We felt as though he would be a good leader, and every team needs one," Sonnen says. "Someone needed to step up and do it. Sean is a good guy and people like him. That's why he became captain."

Now, three months into his senior year, Morgan appears to be on the way to more postseason berths. He holds a perfect 9-0 dual meet record this season, and has placed in the top five at the Mid-

"Wrestling gives me the determination to survive anything else."

Sean Morgan
Oregon Wrestler

lands Tournament, the Mat Town Invitational and the Oregon Open.

There is one honor that Morgan has not received in his Oregon career, but he has set his sights on doing so.

"My main goal is to go to the national tournament and put myself in a position to win it," he says. "All the other matches that lead up to it are steps along the way."

In his years at Oregon, Morgan has gained much more than a good record. He says he has become close friends with every guy in the starting line up, and after college he will miss the road trips and everyone's unique personalities.

"Wrestling gives me the determination to survive anything else," Morgan says. "Everything else seems easier now. Wrestling takes devotion, and it's a hard thing for people to do."

"It will be impossible to leave it. If I'm not competing, I'll still be coaching or helping out. It will be hard to leave it."

Likewise, it will be hard for the Oregon wrestling team to have a leader like Sean Morgan leave.

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